

SALES AND SERVICE Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

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Lisa Bodell
Consultant

**Customer's
Checklist
Opportunity
Knocks**

Little BIGS
Small Details Matter

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MANAGEMENT/CHANGE

Opportunity Knocks

This is the year for positive change.



by Vickie Milazzo

LOOKING BACK, YOU FEEL like you did everything right last year. You worked long hours. You were at the boss' beck and call. And yet, *everyone* around you seemed to gain more, while you stayed stuck. It's time for that to change to ensure opportunity knocks on your door.

Of course, you'd love to look positively and imagine that it will finally be *your* year, but after years of disappointments, you might conclude real success won't happen to you. Wrong! You can achieve your brand of wicked success, but to do so, you have to take action now. Say to yourself, "This is my time. Today, I'll make my life better." And then take action. When you focus on your goals, plan your steps forward and have a little more faith in yourself, you *can* achieve wicked success.

First, examine what you're putting in at work. If you are working longer hours and still getting nowhere, objectively assess the value of your output. For example, how much time do you spend complaining? Do you have to discuss every small issue? Are you a high maintenance employee? Are you stealing time from the company to

manage your personal life? Figure out how to become truly productive and to make progress toward project goals. The success you seek will follow.

To make 2013 the year opportunity knocks on your door, take these steps:

Go boldly after your BIG goals.

Identify your *Big Things*—those goals that connect to your passionate vision. Then choose one to schedule your day



around. For example, your *Big Thing* might be to get promoted. Today you might take on a *high-profile work project* to put you in the running for a promotion. Set a target date for each *Big Thing*, and work steadily toward achieving each of them. Start strong and you'll experience elation from achieving real goals and solving real problems.

Be your own number one fan. If you

don't announce your achievements, no one else will do it for you. With humility, ensure that you keep your name, achievements, and skill set in front of everyone. Get the recognition and credit you've earned. Announcing your accomplishments validates the investments others make in you. Your boss, for example, wants to know that she bet on a winner when she hired you!

Don't under-price yourself. You'd love to ask for more money, but you're afraid to. *The economy isn't great so I'd better lie low*, you reason. But settling for less than you're worth is a big mistake. In fact, it might even cost you a new job or promotion. When I'm hiring, I weed out candidates who under-price themselves because I assume they won't perform at the level I expect. In my eyes, job candidates lose credibility when they under-price themselves. Many people mistakenly think they're doing their employers a favor by not pushing for more or that they'll be more appealing if they don't ask for what they're worth. Most under-pricing occurs because employees and job candidates aren't comfortable asking for what they think they're worth.

Make sure you stand out. Many people get stuck in ruts because they become viewed as commodities—easy

CONTENTS

RON KAUFMAN <i>Customers' Nice List</i>	3	PATRICK MCKENNA <i>Digital Commerce</i>	8	BRUCE HODES AND ALONA BANAI <i>Kickoff Meetings</i>	12
CHIP BELL <i>Customer's Checklist</i>	4	MARK SIMMONS AND MIKE COUGHLIN <i>Social Marketing</i>	8	BRAD PHILLIPS <i>Crisis Communications</i>	13
GRANT CARDONE <i>Sell like Santa</i>	4	ED HESS <i>Enjoy Safe Growth</i>	9	HERNAN VERA <i>Sales Leadership</i>	14
ROBERT WHIPPLE <i>Monsters Under the Bed</i>	5	DAVE ROSEMAN <i>Negotiation</i>	10	JOE THOMAS <i>Five Marketing Basics</i>	14
LISA BODELL <i>Little BIGS</i>	6	JOHN JANTSCH <i>Great Storytellers</i>	10	MARK HOPKINS <i>Unfair Advantage</i>	15
JOHN TSCHOHL <i>Master the Experience</i>	6	BILL MCBEAN <i>Eight Must-Dos</i>	11	STEPHEN PARKER <i>Constructive Conflict</i>	16
CAROL GOMAN <i>Body Language</i>	7	FILIPPO GALLUPPI <i>Keep People Engaged</i>	12	RICHARD SECORD <i>Hire for Attitude</i>	16

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to obtain and easy to replace. And that's not how you want to be perceived at your job. If the people you're working with know that others share your skill set, they won't have any reason to pay you more or give you advanced opportunities. They'll be in control, not you. Do all you can to ensure that you aren't seen as dispensable. Don't become invisible. Stand out. Get in the middle of everything and bring new ideas to the table. Build relationships. By making yourself invaluable and leveraging what makes you unique, you'll make yourself impossible to replace—and *be in control of your own price*.

Network with big players. You tend to gravitate toward people who are similar to you—people who think similarly, who find similar things fun, and who are in similar walks of life. That's fine when it comes to your friendships, but you need to aim higher when networking. More than 60 percent of people find jobs through networking with people who are a rung or two higher than you on the professional ladder. If you impress people who are more successful than you, they can have great influence in your career.

Turn off cyberspace. Replying to email as soon as it hits your inbox kills your productivity and breaks your concentration. If you do nothing but respond to email, you bounce around like a pinball—it will distract you from more important tasks. If you can't bring yourself to close your email box, at least turn off the sound alert and pop-ups so you won't have the annoying ping sound and flash notification every time a potential time-waster drops out of cyberspace and into your mental space. Think of yourself as an ER nurse using her triage skills. Don't start the surgery unless the patient is critical. Email doesn't bleed out, doesn't need defibrillation, and, unlike a critically ill patient, won't expire if not tended to immediately.

Break the feel-good addiction. Today, we're sabotaged by energy wasters: emails, Facebook statuses, receipts to locate, dishes to be washed, files to be organized. These easy tasks make you feel good, but rarely get you closer to accomplishing greater goals. This addiction to your to-do list comes at a high price. By *majoring in minor things*, you never get to your big commitments. Breaking these addictions opens the door to achievement. What you engage and focus on is where you will yield results.

Set aside sacred momentum time—the precious time you set aside each day to work uninterrupted toward achieving your goals. To carve out time, examine every activity and decide how to eliminate it, delegate it, hire it out, or do it faster. My office

opens at 8 a.m. Often by 7:50 there's a line of people forming outside my door. Knowing this madness is coming, I use the early morning hours before the office opens, to work on those projects that need concentration. If part of your day is rarely interrupted, reserve it for momentum time. Keep this time sacred. Use phrases such as, "I'll be available in one hour. What time after that works best?" *Start your day with two-hours of uninterrupted time.*

Have confidence in your abilities. You likely won't reach any goal you set if you don't believe whole heartedly that achieving it is possible. You won't be confident enough to take calculated risks if you don't believe that the limitations in front of you are *surmountable*. Anytime you entertain doubts or try to limit what you think is possible, remind yourself of your past successes. Let them infuse you with pride and bolster your resolve. Believing you can do it is 90 percent of the win. When I walked into my first



meeting with a potential client, my legs were shaking. I recalled that this attorney needed specialized knowledge. That reminder enabled me to make the points I wanted. And I won my first client. When you expand what you're willing to believe about yourself, you can transform who you are and what your life looks like.

Surround yourself with mentors. You can develop the skills, habits, and mindsets that

you need in two ways: 1) go it alone and learn by trial and error in the school of hard knocks; or 2) learn from others who have encountered and surmounted problems that are similar to your own. Surround yourself with as many mentors as possible and practice the skills they pass on to you. I still learn daily from my students, staff, writers, speakers, and business experts. Aggressive learning helps you create competitive advantage.

Safeguard your momentum. Accept that *you won't please everyone* when you focus on your Big Things. A friend might get upset because you no longer meet for lunch. Your spouse might complain because you won't run his errands on a weekday. But they'll get over it. Stop feeling guilty and stay true to your goals. Surround yourself with friends, family, and peers who support your vision. Discard all discouraging messages. These are *your* passions and goals, not anyone else's.

Successful people don't suddenly become *successful*—they work for it. They set *big goals*. They didn't settle for *small-time* achievements. Wicked success can be yours too if you make the same big commitments. **SSE**

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ACTION: Enjoy Wicked Success this year.

Customers' Nice List

This is the one you need to get on and stay on.



by Ron Kaufman

HOW DO YOUR CUSTOMERS view your service? Do you delight or disappoint them?

Much like Santa, customers have their own *naughty or nice* list, and they'll take their business elsewhere if you're not nice to them. If you are overbooked, short staffed, out of stock, or aren't prepared for customer inquiries and complaints, you will land on customers' *naughty* lists. At the core of *uplifting service* is the desire to take care of the needs and concerns of other people. When companies build a service culture that keeps this top of mind, they'll find themselves on the *nice* list every time.

Take *five tips* to stay on the *nice* list:

1. Make it seamless. Busy customers now shop, order, and ask questions across every channel: in person, over the phone, at their computers, on their mobile devices, at work, in their cars, and from home. When you provide integrated, smooth service across channels, you make your customers' lives easier. From web to email to ATM, to counter to SMS to phone calls, to social platforms and home deliveries, when all information about your customers moves seamlessly, your customers can get what they need from you quickly.

2. Customize for your customers. Your customers know they aren't your *only* customer, but they still want to be treated that way. *Personalized service* makes people feel special. When you offer options, choices, range, and variety and create more value through customization and personalization, your customers feel like *they're your favorite*. Implement processes that allow you to recall your customers' questions, preferences, and choices in future interactions. You become the vendor, store, or supplier they recommend to others.

3. Say "Yes!" to service recovery. Companies on the *nice* list know that great service recovery turns *oops* into *opportunities*. Don't treat customer complaints like they're annoying or a waste of time. Instead, *be grateful* when unhappy customers give you a chance to win back their business. For every customer who does complain, several others have the same problem, but don't give you a second chance. When a customer com-

plains, he's telling you what he values. If he says you weren't fast enough, he values *speed*. If he says he's tired of not getting anyone on the phone, he values *human interaction*. *Nice* companies identify what complaining customers value, and ensure that employees are empowered to make amends and offer a *generous and valuable* new action.

4. Happy (engaged) employees = service with a smile. Many service providers seem exhausted, frazzled, and too overwhelmed to do anything more than provide the minimum service. Companies on the *nice* list know how important employees—both customer-facing and non-customer-facing—are to providing *uplifting service*. Your



employees should be energized by their role. When they're clearly aligned, vigorously supported, and joyfully connected to the brand, to colleagues, and to customers, *job satisfaction* fuels *customer satisfaction* in a virtuous cycle.

5. Weave yourself into the fabric of the community. *Uplifting service* works because it makes everyone feel good, from employees to customers to other community members. When your company plays a socially responsible role in the community, good feelings of service spread. Employees *want* to provide great service because it's *gratifying*. When your company participates in the community—uplifting the commercial, civil, cultural, environmental, and economic eco-systems—people notice. They want to give you business, knowing you give back to the community.

Stuck on the Naughty List

Five service behaviors put you on the naughty list:

1. Specialize in the run-around. Doing business with a company should be a *choice*, not a *chore*. Many companies make *receiving service* difficult for

their customers. When companies aren't streamlined, customers have to give the same information to one person after another as they're passed from one department to the next. Customers can feel like they aren't even talking to people who work at the same company.

2. Treat customers like a number. Customers feel like numbers when you don't get to know them as individuals, when you don't personalize service by learning your customers' names or implementing systems that remember their needs. There's no bond, no loyalty. Make one mistake and they're gone.

3. Exhibit a "the customer's always wrong" mentality. Treat complaining customers like they're ruining *your* day. This can mean *blame shifting* or *punishing* an unhappy customer by making the interaction unpleasant. Companies that lack a solid *service recovery program* react to complaining customers by avoiding blame. Employees point the finger at their colleagues or customers and say, "It's not my fault!" They tend to bog down customers even more by requiring receipts and paperwork.

4. Put unhappy, clock-watching employees in front of customers. Hire employees who are working for a wage and providing *service with a grimace*! At *naughty* companies, service reps won't look you in the eye, have no energy to smile, and treat you like the service they provide is a chore. You might leave having received the product or service you need, but you won't leave feeling uplifted or wanting to return.

5. Put the bottom line on a pedestal. Treat customers like a *dollar sign*. When you put the bottom line on a pedestal above your customers, you make them feel like they're being tricked or swindled. You offer deals that aren't backed by great service, or run ads touting low-cost products that don't offer real satisfaction. Customers feel as mercenary as the companies they buy from. Both parties may complete a deal, but neither is uplifted by any lasting value.

To ensure you're on your customers' nice lists: Assess your service culture. What are your customers experiencing today? What will they expect from you tomorrow? When you create an *uplifting service culture*—where everyone is fully engaged, encouraging each other, improving the customer experience, making the company more successful, and contributing to the community—you'll stay on customers' *nice lists*. **SSE**

Ron Kaufman is a speaker and author of *Uplifting Service* (Evolv Publishing). Visit www.UpliftingService.com.

ACTION: Keep on your customers' nice list.

Customer's Checklist

Or you naughty or nice list?



by Chip Bell

SANTA CLAUS IS IN YOUR neighborhood (just like your customers). And, according to the holiday song, Santa is making a list and checking it twice to find out who's been naughty or nice. Just like your customers do!

Let's examine the *naughty and nice list* to see if you might be getting any presents from your customers this season. There might be great gifts like repeat business, increased purchases, or advocacy. Or, there could be *super gifts* like your customers giving you *the benefit of the doubt* when you make a mistake; or affording you more patience when you're serving under pressure.

The *naughty list* might include excess wait, especially the wait that has an answering machine reminding you how important your business is—so important that you have inadequate staff to handle inbound customer calls. It might include indifferent front line staff with one eye on the cash register; one eye on the time clock; and, no eyes on your customers. The *naughty list* would certainly include having hours of availability that suit you but not your customers. It would include a self-service channel with no way to easily and quickly access a live person. And, it would include a return policy that only honors a return if the customer brings the receipt, the original packaging, plus *a note from your mother*.

The *nice list* would include front-line people who are excited to serve. It would include an obvious interest in your customer's community and a spirit of generosity. On the *nice list* would be a sincere trust in customers and a deep pride in the product or service you are offer. And, it would include gestures that make customers feel valued, respected and appreciated.

Just like Santa, your customers see you when you're sleeping and know when you're awake. They know when you've been bad or good.

Learn From Your Bad Behavior

I learned a great service lesson from receiving a speeding ticket recently.

I admit: I was driving 70 mph. It was bright Sunday morning, and I was driving a four-lane highway in a

rural area. Without warning the speed limit dropped to 45 mph. I missed it. It was obviously some local small-town's way of funding the budget, a speed trap using the speed limit sign.

But instead of the local sheriff, I met a state patrolman. When he pursued me, I realized the error of my ways and pulled to the shoulder. I showed him my license and proof of insurance. The officer reviewed my identification and calmly asked, "Mr. Bell, is there an emergency I need to know about?"

Instead of the anticipated, "Do you realize how fast you were driving," I got a *sincere, non-judgmental* assumption that an emergency must be the reason for my decision to drive 25 mph over the limit. He was polite, courteous, and confident. And the impact on me? I was completely honest about the error of my ways, and

he wrote out a speeding ticket that carried a hefty fine. I later wrote a thank-you note to the highway patrol, specifically complimenting this officer.

Stew Leonard is fond of saying, "Is the customer always right? Of course not! Our job is to *make them feel right*." The state patrolman made me *feel right* even though I was dead wrong. He did it with his *innocent until proven guilty* assumption. He completely reframed what could have been a negative encounter by focusing on me and my circumstance, not on the rules and his authority to enforce them.

How can you make your customers *feel right* even when they *behave badly* or *naughty* and are *completely wrong*? **SSE**

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ACTION: Help customers feel right.

SALES/SANTA

Sell like Santa

You can learn from the big guy.



by Grant Cardone

WHEN YOU THINK *holiday*, who comes to mind? Santa dominates mindshare like no one. Even though the holiday season is over, you can still learn a lot from Santa and 10X your sales this year.

1. He attracts massive attention.

Consider how you might do the same. Think about it. You can't go anywhere without seeing evidence of the jolly guy and his message. In fact, some businesses that are not connected to holiday service or products simply give up trying to work during this time of year. You want to be so omnipresent in your field, that you have the same effect on all of your competitors.

2. He takes personal interest in every customer. He's sitting every kid on his lap and having a face to face talk about what the child wants.

3. He has no concerns for the consumer's budgets. It doesn't matter if parents are in bankruptcy and foreclosure with creditors howling at them. Hey, it's Christmas, and gifts are given whether people can afford it or not. I'm not saying that's right, but I'm saying that's the *power and influence* of Santa.

What you can do to dominate like Santa against your competition?

1. Get monster attention for your



business. Think about how you can create a presence in areas such as these: store front, online, marketing mailers, and your neighborhood and marketplace.

2. When you get an opportunity to interact with a prospect or client, really take an interest in them.

Increase your customer interaction to the point of being "too much."

3. Do everything possible to close the deal now. Care so much about your client that you can insist they will be better off with your product or service immediately.

4. Have a manager or another person at your company interact with and greet that customer.

5. Follow up. Be relentless. Keep showing up creatively, with Santa style.

Take these notes from Santa and become a celebrity in your space. Become the

go-to guy or gal. Become the name in the space that you work and live in. Become the one who everyone talks about, the one who sets the standard, who wins the most admiration—because the most admiration ends up in sales and deals.

Make a decision to become known, to get way above the radar, to make the news and become the go-to guy or gal, to dominate the space and garner so much attention that people say, "He's in different league now." **SSE**

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ACTION: Start selling like Santa.

Monsters Under the Bed

Be proactive to shape the future market.



by Robert Whipple

I STILL REMEMBER THE FEAR OF Monsters under my bed. I was fearless when not conscious of a potential for danger, but if my brother suggested I look under the bed for monsters, I would be up all night, attuned to all the noises!

As groups at work become fixated on the potential problems (internal or external), they lose objectivity and enter a world of paranoia. A defensive posture stifles creative progress.

On the flip side, organizations that play only offense can be blindsided easily by changing conditions brought on by the competition or changes in customer preference. So, *seek a healthy balance* where potential problems are anticipated, but the organization pursues an aggressive offensive strategy.

Nine ideas facilitate this balance:

1. Clarify your strategy. Companies that win in the marketplace have a product and service pattern that leaves the competition in a *fast follower* position. Apple out-innovates the competition and thus enjoys the ability to *shape the future marketplace*. They don't always win, but their batting average is high and their number of *at bats* is incredible. The powerful combination of brilliant strategic moves and best-in-class product design capability creates an impressive stream of products.

2. Invest in market intelligence. The ability to *see around corners* isn't based on clairvoyance. The roots of excellent anticipation are knowledge and keen instincts. *Knowledge* involves scanning what everyone else in the market is doing. You can detect major moves by the competition by monitoring patent applications; reading annual reports; keeping up with social networking chatter; tracking the delivery of supplies; noting requests for local ordinance variations or building permits; and listening to industry speculation.

Many organizations try to use eaves-dropping or other inappropriate methods to gather useful information. Illegal processes give an organization the reputation for having ethical problems, which can directly affect market value. In addition, if employees are encouraged to use quasi-illegal tactics,

it drains the moral fiber, leading to *ethical dry rot* and *moral collapse*. In the age of social networking, few things remain hidden for long.

3. Focus on the future. You can't manage the past, but you can learn valuable lessons from what has happened, so you can make better decisions in the future. Once you debrief yesterday's blunders, set them aside and focus on the future.

Create a guiding vision for what your future will look like. If you don't articulate a clear vision, you can't hope to survive the monsters. The vision provides the pull and drive to *create the future*. So, have a clear and compelling vision, and ensure that all activities and all communications support that vision. Once a vision is in place, enroll every soul behind it.

4. Create common team goals. When teams perform poorly due to conflict, usually team members don't share common goals. They think they are on the same page, but they are subtly pulling in different directions. They often have a silo mentality to protect their turf. If the goals describe a better life for all stakeholders and are solidified by consistency from top management, then united teamwork in pursuit of those goals will provide incredible forward progress. Concentrated, persistent teamwork can accomplish great goals.

5. Establish measures. *Accountability* is a key concept in performance management. The adage *what gets measured gets done* is true, so have measures that support the vision. Avoid measures that drive people to do the wrong thing. For example, in an effort to increase revenue, a computer company decided to measure the number of calls made by the sales force. Salespeople soon realized they could make more money by making more calls, even if the calls did not produce sales. The result was a reduction in revenue. Ensure all your measures are driving the right behaviors.

6. Hold people accountable. When holding people accountable, do not focus only on the negative side. In

most cases when leaders want to hold people accountable, it is not to praise them. Turn accountability around so there is a balance. When people perform good work, *holding them accountable* should result in praise. Provide coaching to improve *poor performance*.

7. Build trust. Without trust on the team, all efforts to excel and avoid *the monsters under the bed* will produce tepid results. Low trust results in strained interpersonal relationships. High trust enables the organization to see the dangers clearly and still move forward with courage born of solidarity. With trust in abundance, the world of fear transforms into a world of wonderful potential. People are communi-

cating with sincerity and candor rather than playing games. Internal monsters can't survive in a culture of high trust, since transparency shines a light of truth to reveal *there is nothing under the bed*.

8. Anticipate change.

When facing the challenge of change, you need to be nimble and navigate the minefields of the future without being blown up. The skill of *leaning into change* and welcoming it means constantly scanning the horizon for potential problems and being prepared for whatever might arise. Seek to reveal what may happen and be ready. That means every piece of data, every meeting, every conversation, every email has an element where good detective work is being done. By anticipating change well, you can *shape future events*. When they arrive, they look more like *great opportunities* instead of *dire threats*.

9. Create your own monsters. *Monsters under the bed* are scary because *we can't see them*. They lurk in the shadows. When you turn the table on the monsters, you dispel fear. You might set up a group of people responsible for making modifications to products that add customer functionality or improved style. You might ask your research team to reverse engineer new competitive devices for potential ideas in your products, or try to serve a new market.

Manage uncertainty with a balance of *courage* and *caution*. The pathway to a bright future lies in creating a culture of high trust and learning how to initiate and manage change, not fear it. **SSE**

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ACTION: Create your own marketing monsters.



Little BIGS

Small details matter.



by Lisa Bodell

SLIPPERS PLACED BY THE BED, gourmet chocolate on the pillow, a bottle of water on the nightstand: who doesn't appreciate *nightly turndown service*? Hoteliers (and their loyal guests) recognize the *power of details*, and I translate this idea into a powerful culture change concept that works, called *Little BIGS*.

Since employees resist large-scale mandates, you have to change your approach. *Showing* people how you want them to behave is more powerful than *telling* them—or *mandating*. Instead of top-down initiatives that generate eye-rolling or fear, ignite powerful and lasting behavior change by using the small things—the *Little BIGS*. Little BIGS can be as simple as changing a policy, approach, contract, or a meeting. But it all starts with *you*.

While a grand announcement about your innovation plans sends a signal for change, the change often stops there. People don't have the time or energy for big changes unless they believe that, this time, leadership will genuinely participate. How?

Quietly shaking up the status quo through your own behavior. Little BIGS are about *showing vs. telling*, so when you and your team start leading by example, you create opportunities for people to witness change firsthand. Here are *seven ideas* for making small changes that create big ripple effects:

- **Respect other's time.** Resist the urge to hit the *reply all* button. Limit meetings to five people. Wrap up five minutes early. Dismiss your team at 4 p.m. on Wednesdays. These gestures signify respect for the team's time and encourage efficient use of resources.

- **Use positive inquiry techniques.** Try replacing *defensive or skeptical language* with *open-ended questions*: "In what ways might we do X?" It's more productive—and respectful—than "Why didn't you do X?" By reframing discussions, you can turn the usual litany of excuses into a solutions exchange.

- **Invite 'in the box' thinking.** Place a box outside each manager's door to encourage anonymous suggestions from employees. Maintain momentum and morale by implementing at least one suggestion a month.

- **Kill a stupid rule.** Host a meeting and ask your team *which rules should be killed*. Organize them on sticky notes and classify them according to how easy they are to kill and how strongly the impact would be felt. After a spirited discussion, take a vote and kill a rule—or two. Many rules are just annoyances like long reports, reimbursement protocol, and sign-offs. Killing them *energizes employees* and frees up time for priority projects.

- **Try random acts of kindness.** Try handwritten thank-you notes, birthday balloons, or afternoon lattes on your dime. Your team will notice—and start following your lead.

- **Encourage empowerment.** Demonstrate trust in your teams' judgment by asking them to *make three decisions a week without your approval*. They'll hone their critical-thinking skills, and

you'll get a few hours of your life back.

- **Do some spring cleaning.** Root out inefficiencies and eliminate them. As people are encouraged to provoke change and clean house, they'll subtly influence their peers in ways that create a powerful groundswell.

Little BIGS are small gestures that radiate outward and organically encourage large-scale cultural change. Small adjustments in your behavior unshingle the status quo and set off a ripple effect. Instead of overwhelming employees with a massive overhaul, take a bite-sized approach to the revolution. By applying these ideas, you will witness real results that create a lasting—and strategic—change. **SSE**

Lisa Bodell is CEO of futurethink, an innovation research and training firm, and author of Kill the Company. Visit www.futurethink.com.

ACTION: Try these seven service tips.

SERVICE/EXPERIENCE

Master the Experience

Provide customers more value.



by John Tschohl

DEFINE exceptional customer service as speed, price, and technology. When we seek to make a purchase, we want to do it conveniently, we want it now, and we want it at a good price.

How can you provide exceptional service? Look at how you deal with your customers, from initial contact to closing the deal. *Are you welcoming? Do you call them by name? Do you smile? Do you provide the information that will help them make an informed decision regarding their purchase? Do you deliver fast what you say you will?*

Here are *three examples* of companies that exceed customer expectations.

- At **Metro Bank** in London, you can open an account in 15 minutes, complete with checks, a debit card, and an account password. Metro has sophisticated technology, but it also focuses on *the human touch*. Real people answer its phones in one to two rings 24/7. It also competes on *price*; customer checks are free, and customers can use their debit cards worldwide—with no fees. Metro's focus on speed, technology, and price has proven successful. It opened July 29, 2010 and today has 150,000 accounts and \$2 billion in assets. It projects having 5,000 employees and 200 offices in London area by 2020.



- **Apple**, the most valuable U.S. company—with \$7,000 in sales per square foot at its stores—bases everything it does on speed. Walk into its stores, and an employee immediately greets you, asks what help you need, enters your information into a hand-held device, and, when your name is called, another employee accesses that information and is ready to help you. Apple's focus on its products and on *going above and beyond* in meeting customers' needs has made it a service leader. It bases product innovations on *speed* and, because it has such a strong brand, customers will pay more for those products.

- **Amazon** focuses on *speed, price, technology, and service*, constantly trying to eliminate cost—then passing the savings on to its customers, resulting in prices that competitors can't match. Amazon even has software enabling customers to scan a bar code in a retail store to see

if Amazon has a better price for the product. Customers get confirmation of orders *immediately* and are notified when the order is shipped. Prime members receive *free shipping* and *no sales tax*.

These three companies have incredible value because they create incredible value for their customers. They have mastered the customer experience.

Is the value that you offer your customers enough to keep them coming back to you? Give your customers service that will keep them *loyal for life*. **SSE**

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ACTION: Provide your customers great value.

Body Language

Start reading it like a pro.



by Carol Goman

YOU'VE JUST FINISHED YOUR presentation, and you notice that your boss has crossed his arms over his chest. You realize he's resistant to your ideas.

You ask a colleague to come to your meeting, and she smiles in response. You know she's happy to attend.

You are negotiating with a supplier whose expression of bewilderment is congruent with his statement that he didn't realize *that* clause was in the contract. You assume he's being honest.

You may be right. Or you may be making a *body language error* and reading too much into one nonverbal signal.

Body language cues occur in a *cluster*—a group of movements, postures and actions that reinforce a common point. A single gesture can have several meanings, or mean nothing at all. Body language pros know that a person's overall demeanor is far more revealing than any single gesture—and we refrain from premature conclusions. Notice the first signal, but wait for confirming cues before assigning meaning.

Your boss may cross his arms for any number of reasons, but when the gesture is coupled with a frown, and if he pulls back or rotates his torso away from you, you now have a composite picture and reinforcement to conclude that he is resistant to what you just proposed.

A *smile* is the expression most used to mask other emotional displays (including surprise, anger, disgust, and contempt), so your co-worker's willingness to attend your meeting is more convincing if she also nods her head and leans slightly toward you. The supplier is likely to be sincere if that bewildered facial expression is coupled with hands open at chest level, palms up, and slightly raised shoulders. Try this: Count to three. Refrain from assuming that any single gesture has a certain meaning until you see two corroborating gestures that reinforce the message.

Do you do business internationally? Do you work with a cross-cultural team? What do you know about cultural biases and body language?

When we talk about culture, we're generally talking about a set of shared values that a group of people holds.

Such values affect how members of that group think and act and, more importantly, the kind of criteria by which they judge others. Cultural meanings render some behaviors as *normal* and *right* and others as *strange* or *wrong*. From greeting behaviors to hand gestures to the use of space and touch, body language that is proper and correct in one culture may be ineffective—or even offensive—in another.

Cultural preferences and biases play a role in reading body language.

A Canadian businesswoman, on a trip in India, stopped at the hotel's concierge desk to ask about transportation to her meeting. "Does the hotel have a car service you could recommend?" The man behind the counter shook his head. "Was there taxi service



to the office building?" Again, the man shook his head. Frustrated, the woman asked, "Well, how can I get there?" The man behind the counter calmly replied, "Whichever you prefer," while still moving his head from side to side. In most parts of the world, shaking the head up and down indicates "yes" and shaking the head left to right indicates "no". However, Indians tend to shake their heads about 270 degrees to indicate a "yes" as well as a "no". This is a confusing gesture for people who do not understand the prevalence of this practice in the sub-continent.

The businesswoman might have been even more confused in Bulgaria, where a nod is "no" and a head shake means "yes." In Japan, a nod of the head does not necessarily imply agreement. Often it only means that the listener has understood the message.

Of course, no two people belonging to the same culture will necessarily respond in the same way in every situation.

Generalizations are only valid to the extent that they provide clues on what you will *most likely* encounter when

dealing with a particular culture. Still, to read body language like a pro, you'll need insight into cross-cultural signals.

Basically, there are two kinds of non-verbal signals: instinctive and acquired. Acquired gestures are socially generated, so identical gestures often have different meanings in different cultures.

- In most European countries, the correct way to wave hello and good-bye is palm out, hand and arm stationary, fingers wagging up and down. Common North American waving, with the hand moving side to side means "no" in Mediterranean Europe and Latin America. In Peru that gesture means "come here." Called the *moutza* in Greece, that same gesture is a serious insult, and the closer the hand to the other person's face, the more threatening it is considered to be.

But if acquired behaviors showcase our differences, our commonality is displayed in instinctive body language. The eyebrow flash is one example of an instinctive gesture that is shared by all human beings. People worldwide automatically raise their eyebrows and wrinkle their foreheads when they greet one another. And then, of course, there are the seven universal facial expressions (sadness, joy, anger, fear, surprise, disgust, and contempt) that are displayed the same in San Francisco as they are in Sao Paulo or Singapore.

Few of us are aware of our cultural biases since cultural imprinting begins at a very early age. And while some of a culture's values are taught explicitly, most of them are absorbed subconsciously. Often, it is our lack of awareness of these subconscious biases that create problems when we are trying to translate body language across cultures.

Try this: Become more aware of your cultural biases by creating a list of body language protocol for doing business in your own culture. A list of such rules might include "look people in the eyes," "shake hands firmly," and "don't crowd people." (You are not labeling these behaviors as *right* or *wrong*. You are simply stating your culture's preferences.) Then discover how these gestures are interpreted in the country you will be visiting or by the international co-workers you'll be dealing with. By learning how you may unintentionally send the wrong message, you also become more aware of how *your biases may cloud your judgment* of others. **SSE**

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ACTION: Learn to read body language like a pro.

Digital Commerce

Five trends changed marketing.



by Patrick McKenna

2012 WAS A MONUMENTAL year in digital marketing tactics when it comes to digitization and the switch to mobile media.

Five top trends—Social Media Engagement, Mobile Marketing, Green Initiatives, Apps, and the Rise of Daily Deals—are driving rapid change in digital commerce and altering the marketing methods necessary to reach target audiences and bring the development of streamlined, all-device communications closer to reality.

These five top trends stand out:

1. Social media takes customer engagement to the next level. In 2012, the marketing industry placed more importance on engaging consumers in the digital world. The use of social media for client-company interaction now accompanies, and at times replaces, auto-respond emails, generic phone calls, and other tactics. Facebook's like and share capabilities, Twitter's retweeting and hashtag trending, the Google+ +1 option, and Four-square's location tags create added avenues for brand awareness and loyalty—and allow for organic, consumer-promoted, viral marketing. Such engagement benefits companies promoting themselves, and helps meet consumers' new expectations.

2. The rise of mobile marketing via SMS and QR Codes. Mobile devices are becoming smarter, and with those changes, the methods we use to reach and interact with consumers are advancing. Text messages are now more widely used to communicate branding and marketing messages, and deliver mobile coupons and promotions. QR codes, physical barcodes that call up promotions when photographed with readers on mobile devices, have become a popular method of advertisement and promotion, tethering brick-and-mortar promotions to the digital world.

3. Green initiatives drive sales. As manufacturing, chemicals, and waste continue to threaten the environment, consumers are becoming more and more conscious of their impact on the planet. Companies that promote a more eco-friendly way of doing business have had success marketing to

those environmentally concerned customers. The success of green marketing has also created the practice of greenwashing, bringing into question the legitimacy of many companies that are reaping benefits from marketing green practices. Greenwashing is the deceptive promotion of a company's eco-friendly policies to distract consumers from the larger impact caused by the company's environmentally detrimental products and processes.

4. Applications on mobile devices garner advertising revenue. The popularity of eReaders, iPads, and tablets has marketers using creative new methods to promote products and services via applications. Companies are developing and selling applications for additional revenue, designed to simplify the use of their services on mobile devices. Conversely, ad-supported, free, downloadable "apps" are

driving huge profit through consumer click-throughs.

5. Rise of daily deals. The ubiquity of mobile devices has made receiving and redeeming promotions nearly instantaneous, leading to a proliferation of daily deals. Independent daily deal distributors and web properties of established marketing companies have entered the scene to increase traffic and brand awareness for clients, while opening an avenue for lead generation.

We see several trends in mobile marketing. The ability of companies to reach customers at any time, on any device, has changed the game. Marketers who think creatively and respond quickly to new methods of communication will thrive. **SSE**

Patrick McKenna is CEO of DMi Partners, a Performance Marketing Agency. Visit www.DMiPartners.com.

ACTION: Respond to these five trends.

MARKETING/SOCIAL

Social Marketing

Use various media platforms.



by Mark Simmons and Mike Coughlin

IN TODAY'S DIGITAL AGE, EVERYTHING ON the web—including social media marketing—moves quickly. So looking into the future and planning are critical to capitalizing on new business opportunities to increase your bottom line. But with a variety of social media platforms available, how does each one play into a marketing strategy?

Set Realistic Goals

To help educate managers and business owners on how social media plays a larger role in marketing communications, we discuss simple ways to set realistic marketing goals; how search and social marketing work together; ways to optimize content across the web; effective paid search marketing techniques; and how to build an effective SEO strategy.

As a digital marketing firm, we blend social media and search engine marketing expertise with a complex understanding of cross-channel web analytics to develop a roster of innovative and diverse clients.

Sensing an increase in demand for cross-channel digital marketing ser-

vices, we have expanded our social media and search engine marketing services to leverage the power of web analytics and the natural synergy of these two channels.

With our deep roots in the SEM space and growing expertise in social media, we saw the increasing demand to look at multi-channel attribution.

After reviewing extensive industry research, we realized that last-click attribution, the most common measurement model used by digital marketers, undervalues social media's role in engaging customers earlier in the buying process. Hence, we felt that it made sense to offer both Social Media Marketing and SEM in an integrated approach. The two channels cannot be managed in silos. They must be managed together.



Take a Holistic Perspective

We approach digital marketing from a holistic perspective. As the digital space continues to evolve, our mission is to stay on top of the trends. Without an evolving strategy and ability to look across channels, we couldn't deliver top value to our clients. Mixed Digital offers solutions in social media, paid search, Search Engine Optimization, web analytics consulting, and mobile marketing solutions. **SSE**

Mark Simmons and Mike Coughlin are cofounders of digital media group, Mixed Digital, a premier digital marketing consultancy. Visit MixedDigital.com. [Facebook.com/mixeddigital](https://www.facebook.com/mixeddigital). [Twitter.com @mixeddigital](https://twitter.com/mixeddigital).

ACTION: Improve your social marketing.

Enjoy Safe Growth

It's key to sustainable job creation.



by Ed Hess

WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT JOB creation and how critical it is to our economic health and future. But who *are* America's job creators? Are they the nation's richest individuals, big public companies, hot start-ups? The answer is none of the above. Almost all net job creation in recent years came from existing private, high-growth companies. Are you surprised?

To get serious about job creation, we need to focus more on nurturing existing private, high-growth businesses—doing what's necessary to create a healthy small business environment, such as encouraging investment in private business through tax incentives, encouraging hiring inside the U.S., making credit readily available, and so forth. But it also means zeroing in on an issue that often gets overlooked: growth.

We need to educate business owners on how to manage the risks and challenges presented by growth—how to overcome the challenges owners face when they try to grow. What are the big challenges facing the nation's *real* job creators?

Fix Facts of Business Growth

Here are a few of the facts every owner and manager should know about business growth:

1. Don't grow yourself into trouble. Many successful small businesses implode when they try to grow too much too quickly. Growth can outstrip people, processes, and controls. Cash flow management during growth periods is critical, because in many cases growth requires investments in people, technology, supplies, etc., ahead of the receipt of cash from customers. You may not be able to afford all the available growth. Instead of following the *grow or die* myth, adopt the *improve or die* mantra. As a business grows, you have to scale people, processes, and controls. That means not only more but *better* people, processes, and controls. A focus on improvement is critical because you must maintain high quality standards and financial

controls in the haste of growth.

2. Know when to release the growth "gas pedal." I find that every private business faces the same challenges as it attempts to grow. Successful entrepreneurs learn to pace their growth. They use what I call the *gas pedal* approach to growth. Letting up on the growth pedal to give their people, processes, and controls time to catch up. We also found that strategic focus was critical to safely growing. Focusing on doing one thing that lots of customers needed—better than the competition—equated to big opportunities.

3. Growth means learning to effectively delegate. For a business to grow, the entrepreneur must grow also. When growth begins, entrepreneurs quickly find that they can do only so much and that they need help



from others to properly serve customers. They must evolve from being a doer to a manager of employees and then eventually to a manager of managers (a leader).

This may sound easy but it isn't. Most entrepreneurs don't like to give up control of any aspect of their business. Facing the fact that they can't do it all on their own and that they must learn to rely on others to complete certain tasks (and not exactly how they themselves would do them) can be a hard reality to swallow.

4. Upgrading never ends. The people, processes, structure, and controls needed to manage a business with \$1 million of revenue generally do not work for a business with \$10 million of revenue. Entrepreneurs often learn the hard way that growth means continual change. As you grow, the solutions that worked at one level will most likely not work at the next.

Inflection points for the companies I've studied occurred frequently when they expanded to 10, 25, 50, and 100 employees. When these changes take place, entrepreneurs often realize their hope of having a smooth-running machine is an elusive dream. Successful entrepreneurs and their employees are open to learning and adapting in an incremental, iterative, and experimental fashion.

5. Manage the business risks created by growth. Growth stresses people, processes, quality controls, and financial controls. It can dilute a business's culture and customer value proposition and put the business in a different competitive space. Understanding these risks is critical to managing the pace of growth and preventing growth from overwhelming the business.

To get a better handle on growth risks, consider how your strategic space will change as you get bigger. You'll probably enter a new competitive space, facing bigger and better competitors than you previously faced. Those new competitors may be better capitalized than you and be able to engage in price competition, driving down your margins. You can minimize this and other big risks by planning for growth, pacing growth, and prioritizing what controls and processes you need to put in place prior to taking on much growth. I call it 'what can go wrong' thinking, and entrepreneurs can't indulge in too much of it.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel—you can learn from the experiences of other successful business builders and increase your chances of success. You need to think differently about growth and learn real-life business growth stories and challenges. If you can be more successful as you face the challenges of growing your business, then you can help more people achieve their dreams, create more jobs, and have a positive impact on society. Business is much more than just making money—it is the primary way most people achieve their dream of providing a better life for themselves and their families. Growing businesses also has a valuable impact on their customers and communities. These businesses aren't just job creators—they're community builders. **SSE**

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ACTION: Enjoy safe, sustainable growth.

Negotiation

It's an invaluable skill.



by Dave Roseman

NEGOTIATION IS A KEY LEADERSHIP skill. However, many people are *uncomfortable* or *apprehensive* in a negotiation.

Having worked 30 years in the national security field, I conducted negotiations worldwide with individuals of widely varying backgrounds and experiences. Yet, *the negotiating principles and techniques for resolving difficult issues always remained the same.*

Six Key Principles and Techniques

Practice these six key principles:

1. Identify—in advance—the interests or needs of the other side. Too often in preparing for a negotiation, you focus exclusively on your interests, and arrive with a case filled with notes and arguments to be made to reach your goals. Try paying attention to the needs or interests of the other party to discern *their interests*. They may be *tangible* (money, time) or *intangible* (reputation, status)—and the *intangibles* may be more important, depending on the circumstances and setting.

2. Immediately acknowledge what is important to the other side. Once you sit down and exchange a few pleasantries, *take the first step in the negotiation* by immediately and affirmatively acknowledging and agreeing to one or two of their needs or interests—without qualification. This counterintuitive action creates a negotiating environment that is more conducive to success, and enables the other party to make one or more early agreements to your *must have* items; it also fosters the notion that you're a leader from whom they can expect *good faith* and *courage*.

3. Assess and build rapport. *Assessment* includes determining the factors that are likely to motivate the other party. *Rapport building* includes finding something you have in common, like a common background, and making appropriate reference to it. Make *assessment* part of the negotiation from the outset, and start building rapport before the substantive discussion in order to address the other person with more understanding and respect.

4. Enough said. Come prepared with *concise and compelling statements*—and know when to stop talking and start

listening carefully as the other side speaks (not concentrating on the next *counterargument* or retort). This goes beyond treating people with consideration. It shows them that you, and they, are engaged in good faith dispute resolution, which should benefit *both* your interests. In a fast-paced negotiation, the impulse to interrupt is hard to overcome. When you interrupt, you risk losing valuable insight into the other side's thinking, or valuable information. You may also jeopardize an attainable concession.

5. Creative solution. When issues are complex and involve strong emotions and entrenched positions, the dispute resolution process may become stalled. Advance preparation is critical to reaching a *creative solution*. This means, for example, adding into the proposed solution one or two

items—or removing an element from the mix. Often, the creative solution presents a *high likelihood of success*. The negotiators for the other side will prefer to bring back a solution to a complex problem, even if some adjustment has been made to achieve the goals.

6. Avoid certain actions. Avoid *posturing* for effect (this appears unprofessional and is counterproductive). There also should be *no verbal sparring*; a person may win a point, but jeopardize the negotiating goal. Avoid *absolute no's*, particularly early, as these statements shift the negotiation from conflict resolution to confrontation.

Start using these key principles. **SSE**

Dave Roseman was a high-ranking officer in CIA's clandestine service for 20 years. He is author of OMG My Kids are Talking About the Awesome Benefits of S.I.N. Visit www.successinnegotiating.com.

ACTION: Apply these six timeless principles.

MARKETING/STORIES

Great Storytellers

Involve customers to craft story.



by John Jantsch

GREAT LEADERS KNOW HOW to tell a story—the key story about why they do what they do, why others should commit to doing it as well, and why a community of customers, suppliers, and partners should sign up for the cause.

People connect with stories that move them. Every business should produce stories that help prospects and customers connect at a deeper level. The Internet, while making it easy to find information, has left us craving *real connections* with *real people and companies*.

Storytelling as marketing.

Storytelling is a key skill of effective leaders—people who create, live, nurture, curate, and tell important stories (and coach others to tell the story).

Yes, Southwest Airlines founder **Herb Kelleher** chain-smoked, loved Wild Turkey whiskey and dressed up as Elvis for company functions, but he was a legendary story teller. One story involved a battle with a competitor. The story, *Malice in Dallas*, details a friendly contest between Southwest Airlines and Stevens Aviation. They were deciding the rights to a slogan. Stevens had been using *Plane Smart* as its slogan one year before Southwest unknowingly began infringing with its *Just Plane Smart* ad campaign. After



bringing this to Southwest's attention, Stevens proposed that, rather than paying lawyers to hash out the dispute, the companies send their CEOs to battle it out, one-on-one, in an arm-wrestling contest before employees and media.

This rambunctious alternative to a drawn-out, million-dollar courtroom battle was exactly the sort of antic that Americans have come to associate with their favorite maverick airline.

Many businesses attain success based on the founder's ability to tell a *vision story* about the business, product, or service *before they are a reality*. Much business is won on the belief that, "If they buy it, we'll figure out how to make it."

Take these three action steps:

1. Craft a story about you, your company, products or services that conveys why you do what you do, who you are, what keeps you awake at night, what motivates, thrills and scares you, what makes you laugh, and what you do to improve the world.

2. Get your story down to one page and start telling it to everyone. Start living your story and using it as a core marketing message. Your story, if done well, is the foundation for what makes you stand out. Use it on your website, on the back of invoices, during sales presentations, and as a hiring tool.

3. Use resources to help you create and tell your story. Learn to tell your story so passionately that those who listen simply *want to believe and follow*. **SSE**

John Jantsch is a consultant, speaker and author of The Commitment Engine: Making Work Worth It (Portfolio/Penguin). Visit www.makingworkworthit.com.

ACTION: Become a great storyteller.

Eight Must-Dos

Set your business up for success.



by Bill McBean

THIS YEAR SPEND SOME TIME thinking about the big picture and take eight steps to set your business up for success.

All year long you've been in frantic motion. You've put out fires; solved employee snafus and issues; juggled conflicting priorities; fielded exhausting back-to-back meetings, telephone calls, and endless emails; motivated yourself and others; and, kept blocking and tackling by leading and managing your company toward achieving the objectives and goals you set.

You owe it to yourself, your customers, employees, and future to do some reflection and forward planning. Keeping a cool and measured perspective on where you are, where you're headed, and exactly what you need to do to get there is crucial to success.

When you get so caught up in the daily whirlwind that you lose sight of the realities, success may slip away. It pays to reevaluate your market and company's place in it and ensure your practices are in line with *the facts*.

Here are eight *must-dos* to tackle:

1. Hold a 2012 post-mortem. Gauge the effectiveness of your leadership by defining the *destination* and *direction* of the company, deciding how it should look and operate when it arrives, and asking: *Did the business have a successful year? What did it do well? What could it have done better? Where are future opportunities to grow the business? What are the threats to the company's success? What is holding the business back?* These questions force you to define the leadership skills needed to move your business from where it is today to where you want it to be tomorrow. Evaluate your personal strengths and those of your business, and compare those evaluations to those of your competitors.

2. Do a top-to-bottom walk-through of systems and procedures. Examine what's working and what isn't. You may find that a system that once worked well no longer does (since the marketplace has changed, competitors have changed tactics and strategies, or customers' needs have shifted) or that your business has fallen into bad habits. Look

for inconsistencies in how employees handle tasks that impact customers or handle the data you use to make decisions. This enables you to catch problems before they develop into crises. If you're not controlling your procedures and processes, you don't really *own* your business. You're just a *spectator* watching others play with your money. Great procedures and processes need controls, and these controls create great results and skilled employees. *Processes operate your business—and employees operate the processes.*

3. Identify your best customers and give them a heartfelt thank you.

Protecting your company's assets is job one, and *customers* are your best assets. Without them, *no one* gets paid. Of course, *all customers are not created equal*. Some are more profitable than others, and they're not always who you think they are. Once you identify your VIPs, create ways to enrich the relationship and continually add value for them. Saying *thank you* doesn't hurt, no matter how often they hear it. No one likes to be taken for granted, so make a call or send a letter. It's amazing the ROI you'll get. Your profit is your competitor's opportunity. Your opportunity is their customers and profits.

4. Don't neglect your other big asset—employees. If possible, meet with each one individually. Even if it's not a formal performance review, a quick conversation one-on-one can help you shore up relationships, challenge low performers to do better, and reward and recruit your highest performers. Rewards don't have to come in the form of a big bonus. You might offer an extra day off, a gym membership, or a gift card for a spa treatment as a thank you for a job well done. Show employees that *you recognize and appreciate their contributions* with a heartfelt *thank you*, a compliment passed along from a customer, an inquiry into an employee's goals and aspirations, or a simple handshake. Be firm—but fair, and show them your care.

5. Review your marketing campaign. Ask yourself: *Are you marketing aggres-*

sively enough to attack the market, or are you trying to coast by, letting your competitors stir up the market? Are you targeting the best possible markets and customers? Might a customer reward program improve repeat purchases? Would ad money be better spent on direct mail? Does a huge social media campaign make sense, or are you tweeting fruitlessly into cyberspace? It takes marketing to bring customers in and it takes marketing to keep them. Marketing is an investment and deserves your focused attention. Marketing without measurement is being reckless with your money. Results matter and have to be measured. Create an objective and measure results against it. Your best market opportunity may in fact be your own customer base.

6. Meet with your accountant, attorney, and key advisors. These specialists know things you don't. Their perspective can be valuable to you. Planning for a future you can't predict is part of



your job, and these advisors can help you gather the information needed to make smart decisions. Ask them, "What are the three most important things I need to know now?" You might pose this question in advance of the meeting so they'll have time to think about it. Factor their feedback into your plans. By

touching base with key members of your network, you educate yourself.

7. Kick off a cost-cutting, gross-profit-building mission. When financial uncertainty looms, you need to have some cash on hand. And, the best ways to create cash is to find added gross profit and to cut some expenses. Ask yourself: *What expensive mistakes did we make last year? How can we avoid them this year? And what can we do to build up the cash cushion?* Look for smart, well-thought-out ways to save money and start building up your cash cushion. *Cash is king, especially when you need it.*

8. Set some realistic goals. Aim high. Don't be lulled into complacency. Seek to win and retain market share. If you take your focus off the market, competitors will step in and take what you have worked so hard for. To succeed, you need to have a *warrior mindset* and *be on your game 24/7*. Do a *yearly check-up*, build on the success, and prepare yourself and business for the future. **SSE**

Bill McBean is general partner of McBean Part-ners, and chairman of Our-Mentors, and Net Claims Now and author of The Facts of Business Life (Wiley). Visit www.FactsOfBusinessLife.com.

ACTION: Engage in these eight actions.

Keep People Engaged

Maximize efficiency, productivity.



by Filippo Galluppi

IN TODAY'S COMPETITIVE CLIMATE, profitability trumps all other management concerns. As a result, many internal problems stem from management's focus on its employees meeting sales quotas, rather than focusing on the *Human Factor*—how employees' unique characteristics contribute to success. The key factor in a company's ability to grow is the relationship of the employees with each other, and with management. Management can have the greatest influence since, by its actions and rules, it creates the culture.

Rules and pronouncements from people of authority can cause employees to feel positive about their ability to request assistance and receive messages of approval. We're motivated by more than monetary rewards (bonuses or raises); in fact, *we are more influenced by a culture that positively influences the inner being—the Human Factor.*

One example of this is the temperature of the workplace. Some people like it hot (F80 degrees), and some people like it cold (F68). If they work in the same room, it can be a source of friction. Management might consider moving a person to another area where a heater is available or to a cooler room, if they are sensitive to people's *Human Factor* needs.

There is also the matter of justice in recognizing achievements of individuals or teams. If there is a failure to achieve success, it may not always be traceable to a person or a group. It may be poor management policy or lack of timely action that caused a failure. Managers must be honest in admitting their contribution to the mistake. Otherwise, a cover-up develops, creating animosity among the people involved. Failure to admit complicity hurts morale and profits.

Mistakes can be a source of strength through learning, as long as the cause can be identified and is not repeated. The divulging of the truth can even be rewarded to increase the trust between managers and employees. Management can create a *trusting culture* to have a more powerful team. Nothing slows innovation like living in fear of being accused of making a mistake.

• *Southwest Airlines*—a profitable performance-based company—focuses on making the job of its unionized employees easy where possible. Here, the power of management assists not only its people but also its many customers. The culture encourages employee support by using its policy to remove the obstacles that could make work harder to perform or, make dealing with customers more complicated. Managers focus on making things *simple*, and *friendly* toward employees and customers, showing high sensitivity to the *Human Factor*.

• *Zappos* has 1,600 employees who strive to provide top quality customer service. Management has deeply engaged workers and a *Human Factor*-oriented policy for screening new

hires. It starts with a four-week boot camp. After the first week, Zappos offers to pay any of the prospects \$1,000 to *quit the program* if they won't become a part of the company's warm and inviting culture. Only about 10 percent of the prospects quit. This indicates that after hearing about the company's *unique culture*, they want to be part of it.

Why spend \$1,000 on each employee? The people who pass that screen will be in an empowered atmosphere where the *Human Factor* of employees stands on equal footing with the goal of *maximizing growth of sales and profits*. **SSE**

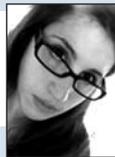
Filippo Galluppi is a business owner, university lecturer, and author of The Missing Human Factor: How To Help Employees Work For You Or With You. Visit themissinghumanfactor.com.

ACTION: Attend to the human factor.

MANAGEMENT/MEETINGS

Kickoff Meetings

Start holding them quarterly.



by Bruce Hodes and Alona Banai

WHY HOLD KICKOFF MEETINGS? WHY throw annual celebrations, parties or any festivities? What is the point? We hold events—such as kickoff meetings—to mark special occasions.

A kickoff meeting takes place over an hour or day. People either physically attend or join in via video, webinar, and other media. Typically, all employees are involved, enabling the *entire organization* to come together to launch an initiative. Top management can give a presentation, emphasizing optimism about what is possible and engaging people in real work ahead.

A kickoff meeting can be one of the best uses of company time and money.

Stop the past, start the future—now. Kickoff meetings allow you and everyone involved to put the past behind. You can recognize that, yes, you faced challenges—which possibly meant salary cuts, layoffs, and a sense that the survival of the company was at risk—but *the past is past*. In this exercise, employees get to appreciate everything—good and bad—that happened. This review brings completion. As one season closes, the next possibilities unfold.

A future vision is essential. The kickoff allows leadership to articulate and promote a three- to five-year time



horizon. Leadership can relay the vision for the upcoming year in broad brushstrokes, generating real options that resonate with people. This future needs to compel employees with its possibility. The team should see that achieving this future goes beyond rehashing past accomplishments.

Kickoff meetings engage people. At one meeting, we rolled out new values and led exercises that allowed people to *experience these values directly*. One value was “integrity.” The exercise was designed so participants got to experience and explore what “integrity” meant for themselves and others.

Get up and running. Departments

can do kickoff meetings to build cohesion and momentum. Plan how to improve and grow in order to deliver on the future. Planning can be facilitated by the department head or by key employees. Each department can review its accomplishments and dis-

appointments and conduct a SWOT analysis, address critical issues, and design steps for resolving them and moving forward. Time permitting this may include setting the upcoming year's department objectives, action plans, and first-quarter milestones.

Kickoff meetings let you put the past in the past, create a company and future to live into, facilitate departmental planning, begin training, or launch initiatives. All this builds camaraderie and support. Such a deal! So, plan and hold a kickoff—this month! And *involve others*. That is the bottom line. **SSE**

Bruce Hodes is CEO and Alona Banai is Executive Marketing Asst. at CMI. Call 800-883-7995 or email bhodes@cmiteamwork.com, abanai@cmiteamwork.com.

ACTION: Hold a quarterly kickoff meeting.

Crisis Communications

You need to learn and then apply five truths.



by Brad Phillips

THE LEGENDARY INVESTOR Warren Buffett once said, "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it."

That quote rings true for those of us who help companies manage crises, but I'd add one line to his quote: a crisis doesn't always do the most damage—the *handling* of it often does.

Some crises seem to have a short shelf life while others linger for months, taking down top executives, destroying share price, and shattering a once-respected brand's image.

A well-handled crisis, on the other hand, can be an opportunity for brands to prove their competence and enhance their image. One Oxford University study found that companies that managed a crisis well actually *gained* value just two months after a catastrophe, since crises "offer an opportunity for management to *demonstrate their talent in dealing with difficult circumstances.*"

Although every crisis has its own, unique qualities, these five "truths" usually help determine whether a company in crisis will succeed or fail in preserving its reputation.

Truth 1: You'll be cast as a good guy or bad guy. When a crisis strikes, the media cast roles almost immediately. News organizations bestow only two starring roles: the good guy and the bad guy. That's because most media stories strip the narrative down to its most basic parts, resulting in each character being presented as an *incomplete figure*.

The actions you take early in a crisis will help determine how the media cast your role. If your response is tone-perfect from the start, you stand a greater chance of being perceived as the good guy—or at least *not* the bad guy. The media want to know that you "get it"—that you fully grasp the accusations being leveled against you, understand the scope of the problem, and have the ability to effectively manage the crisis.

But if you come across as defensive, dismissive or uncompassionate, the media will portray you as the bad guy. And once the media cast you in that role, you're going to find it difficult to convince them you deserve to be recast as a more heroic character.

Truth 2: You must communicate immediately. When a crisis strikes and reporters knock at your door, you should *begin communicating immediately*. Often, that means making a public statement within the hour. You should be "present in your own coverage" to establish your company as the primary source of information for reporters.

If you don't talk, others will. Reporters have to file their stories with or without your cooperation, and they'll have no choice but to fill a void of information by getting their intelligence from an external source—a former employee who doesn't have her facts straight, a critic who's been warning of this looming disaster for years, or a competitor who secretly relishes your misfortune.

It's no surprise that those outside



sources are often inaccurate—but if you're not present in your own coverage, those false charges can become widely accepted "facts."

That dynamic is truer than ever in the age of Twitter, when anyone with a smartphone can tweet a false allegation in one nanosecond. If you're not present in your own coverage, you've voluntarily surrendered a critical opportunity to rebut false charges and disseminate accurate information.

Truth 3: The media will side with the victims. When the media cast roles after a crisis strikes, no voice is more compelling than that of the victim's. People who have been injured by another party, especially by a larger institution, are inherently relatable. That's particularly true when the victims are *ordinary* people, since we tend to put ourselves in their shoes when we read, hear, or watch their stories.

It's challenging for companies to appear as sympathetic as an individual victim. But it's not impossible. The best way to earn goodwill with the audi-

ence is to treat the victims with genuine humanity in your response.

Organizations in crisis tend to over-rely on the facts, especially if the facts prove their innocence. They forget that *facts alone are rarely enough in a crisis*. If your facts are right but your tone is wrong, the public is probably going to view you as clueless, heartless, or both.

Truth 4: The spokesperson you choose speaks volumes. The person who you choose to communicate during a crisis tells the public a lot about your handling of it. If you select someone too high in the hierarchy, the public will conclude that the crisis is bigger than originally thought. If you select someone too low, the public will conclude that you're not taking the crisis seriously enough. Err on the side of going too high rather than too low. That doesn't necessarily mean starting with the CEO, but giant, reputation-defining events—massive oil spills, incidents with mass casualties, political scandals—may still demand the CEO as spokesperson from the start. The size and scope of a crisis will help you determine the right spokesperson; generally speaking, the bigger the crisis, the more senior the spokesperson.

Truth 5: Burying bad parts of the story makes it worse. In the earliest moments of a crisis, journalists rarely know all of the facts. They may have discovered only a sliver of the story, leading executives to conclude they should deal solely with the parts of the story the media already know about rather than revealing additional—and more damning—parts of the story.

Their rationale usually boils down to "Why make a difficult situation even worse?" But that kind of short-term thinking often backfires, activating the media's "gotcha" instinct and worsening the tone of your coverage.

If you allow reporters to discover each new part of the story on their own—with each revelation spawning its own story—you will keep the crisis alive longer than necessary. That steady drip of new information will diminish your credibility that much more—assuming you still have any left at all.

It's true that you may not know all of the facts at first. In that case, it's imperative that you tell reporters you don't have all of the facts yet, are working hard to obtain them, and will share them as soon as you learn more. **SSE**

Brad Phillips is president of Phillips Media Relations and author of The Media Training Bible: 101 Things You Absolutely, Positively Need to Know Before Your Next Interview. Visit www.MrMediaTraining.com/Book.

ACTION: Apply these five truths.

Sales Leadership

Coach in the secret sauce.



by Hernan Vera

THE RECESSION HAS CAUSED companies to cut costs, do more with less, increase span of control for managers, and protect the bottom line. Now that they've reached the limit of what they can do on the *expense* side, managers realize that *improving the effectiveness of salespeople* is the best way to grow revenue.

Since putting the entire sales team through training is not in the budget and since putting more feet on the street adds more burden on sales managers, *what can sales managers do to meet challenging sales quotas with limited resources?* The secret sauce is to *spend more time coaching salespeople*.

The ability to *coach, lead and develop* salespeople is where sales managers win big. Focus your coaching efforts more on the front end of the sales process to make a bigger, long-term impact on performance. And spend about *40 percent of your time* coaching your sales talent. So, how does a sales manager become a better coach?

1. Get trained as a coach. Becoming a good coach takes a skill set few managers have, which requires training. Although there may be no budget to train the entire team, managers can justify the cost of being trained so they can coach their team to deliver a more consistent performance. Most companies train their sales managers on coaching; however, few train them extensively.

2. Understand who you are coaching. In a sales team, a few people consistently exceed their goals with sales from a handful of existing customers. Another group—usually new-hires—struggle to understand the company's culture and its offerings, its competition and the industry. Then, there's a large tenured group in the middle that is inconsistent in meeting its goals. Sales teams are usually structured around territory or product expertise. Each group has diverse coaching needs, so the sales manager needs a plan to drive performance improvements across the entire team.

3. Don't forget the middle 60 percent. Sales managers tend to focus their coaching either on *poor performers* because it's clear they need help or on

the *top performers* because it's more fun. But *greater ROI comes from coaching the middle 60 percent of the team*—good coaching can improve their performance by 19 percent.

4. Coach up front. Selling is performance-oriented, so the focus tends to be on *closing the sale*. But unless salespeople only respond to unsolicited RFPs, *coaching earlier in the process* helps them better understand the needs of the clients and the strength of the value proposition, improve interactions with clients, and qualify the opportunity's chance of success.

5. Consistent coaching = consistent performance. Sales managers often see coaching as a series of discrete events instead of a single continuous process. Regular *opportunity and pipeline reviews* are a powerful coaching tool if the time is focused on strategizing and

planning next steps in the sales process and coaching the salesperson.

6. Coach to build a better, smarter team. Sales teams can break old habits and develop the new skills needed to succeed. It's not about the products or services—it's about managing a sales process: from *identifying the right prospects to closing the sale*. Whatever the sales methodology, the sales manager must coach, develop and lead the team.

Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your team and coach each person to develop their skills and achieve *consistent performance*. The shortest path to meeting revenue goals is by being a better sales leader, coach and developer of *sales talent*. It's the *secret to success*. **SSE**

Hernan Vera is VP, marketing and sales operations for Pitney Bowes Management Services. Visit www.pb.com.

ACTION: Coach for consistency.

MARKETING/INTERNET

Five Marketing Basics

These set you apart in the market.



by Joe Thomas

SO HERE YOU ARE AT THE end of another ho-hum year. Last year about this time, you threw up your hands and yelled, "Thank goodness the world's ending in 2012 and I don't have to figure out how to sell my products or services in 2013!" Now you're scrambling. Hey, we're still here. The Internet is more congested than ever, and all of your keywords rank in the top 10 most-searched words on Google (a sure sign of *stiff competition*). With all of that competition, *how can you set yourself apart?*

Unless you have a line on the winning Powerball numbers, you need a plan. People actually do succeed on the Internet. They sell shoes and shirts, software, services, and books. They have *the right tools*. Without them, you won't build an audience, network, social media following, or sales. What tools do you need? Here's a checklist:

- **A fully functional, engaging website.** A professional website is to sales what oxygen is to a human being. Without it, you're dead. Count on this—no website or bad web site = poor sales or no sales. 'Nuff said?
- **A solid PR foundation.** Getting your message out there needs to be your top priority. You need to BE the news. And once you have publicity, you need to



put it to work for you by sharing it on your website and through social media.

- **Get a handle on social media:** You can't just go out in the Twittersphere and play the "Follow Friday" game. (If you don't know what Follow Friday is, you really need to take a crash course on social media.) Don't make the mistake of posting only *BUY MY PRODUCT NOW* to your *social media following* (people won't follow for long).

- **Update your content or lose your audience:** Blog. Then blog again. Then, just when you think you've *blogged enough*—blog some more. Keeping your content fresh and unique gives people a reason to come back. If they don't buy your product or service today, maybe they will next month. But they won't if you don't give them a *reason to come back*.

- **Understand the meaning of the word 'entertain':** The Internet used to be a place to read about things. Now, it's where you go to *WATCH* things. If your site doesn't have video, you'll lose potential customers. Are you a lawyer, doctor or financial genius? Introduce yourself with video. Are you an author? What will entertain and excite people—your *book cover* or a *book trailer*?

By putting the right set of tools in your toolbox, you can succeed. Whatever you do, don't spend your time or money without a toolbox—you won't like the results if you do. **SSE**

Joe Thomas is founder and owner of Left Brain Digital (www.leftbraindigital.com), a web development company. He's an award-winning web designer/developer in print and web design and development.

ACTION: Practice these five marketing basics.

Unfair Advantage

Apply five tips to create one for your team.



by Mark Hopkins

FINDING A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY that engages your strengths within a market that you are passionate about dramatically increases your odds of success. Successful businesses are led by leaders with better ideas and better execution. Better ideas come from deep insight, from knowing more than the competition does. Such insight is easy to get if you delve into a market that you are passionate about and tough to develop if the market only represents a way to make a buck. Better execution happens naturally when you give the customer the experience that you would want.

Take time to figure out what you are passionate about. As Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, once said, “One huge mistake people make is that they try to force an interest on themselves. You don’t choose your passions—your passions choose you.” If a business opportunity *looks good* but the market doesn’t do anything for you, think long and hard before pulling the trigger. Keep looking for something that does. You’ll know it when you see it. Many of us struggle to define our passions. Sadly, we’re often discouraged from pursuing our interests. Or we’re told that our passions are unrealistic and that we can’t make a living by pursuing them. That’s wrong—do not settle for less.

To converge on what you are most passionate about, keep a journal. You’ll *discover* what you like, what you are good at, what is important to you, and ideas for doing what you love.

Take Five Steps

Once you know the business you want to be in, **take five steps** before investing your hard-earned cash (and other investor’s capital) to dramatically shift the odds of success in your favor.

1. Learn from the best. Experience is how you gain the knowledge you need to set you apart from the competition. In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell estimates that it takes 10,000 hours of focused effort or practice to become world class at something. But there are shortcuts to earning this level of experience. This means finding a company, or compet-

ing franchise, that excels within the market you plan to enter and learning all that they have to teach you. A company like this has spent thousands of hours fine tuning its business processes and its job one, upon hiring you, is to teach them to you. Working with a company like this will dramatically change the trajectory of the franchise or business you plan to pursue.

Learning from the best is also a great way to test the strength of your passion. Some people start a business only to find out that they hate it. Figuring this out before you invest enables you to reconsider your choice before you invest your life savings.

2. Recognize and quickly analyze opportunities. While you are learning from the best, look for better ways to do things to take cost or time out of the process of serving the customer or to improve the customer experience. Keep a list of your ideas to *gain an edge in the market*.

Also look for opportunities that present themselves to you. They may be related to what you are doing—like a customer who knows of a location that has a high demand for what you do. Or it might be an unrelated opportunity that is even more exciting. Notice opportunities to add value. *Anytime* you find yourself saying, “Wow!” or “Cool!” or “Huh?” and especially, “Someone ought to figure out how to . . .” you have just encountered the source of an opportunity.

3. Genuinely care about others. While the initial decision to start a new business may be yours, the moment you make that decision, you will need people in your life who have your back—as many as you can get. How you interact with them can either put your dream on the fast track or guarantee that it will never happen. You need people you can trust. And trust is most effectively built through a relationship that demonstrates that you actually care about others.

People and organizations gravitate toward those who prove that they are

trustworthy—who do what they say they’ll do, don’t have hidden agendas, and care about others’ success as well as our own. Trusting relationships work better and are more productive. An organization that is full of people who trust each other outperforms one comprised of a randomly assembled group.

Start building your *dream team* of the future by caring about others now. *Great companies are built on great teams*, and you can never know enough talented people ready to jump at the chance to work with you again.

4. Create a database of expert guides. Being an owner means you need to have expertise in a lot of subjects, from



accounting to marketing to strategic planning. You will face challenges that you have no idea how to overcome. Building a list of people who are willing to advise you when you need expert advice may just save your business. A guide is someone who has the experience to help you make the right decision. By having access to such experts for tactical questions can save pre-

cious time with your mentor for big-picture questions.

5. Find a mentor who has succeeded at what you plan to do. There’s *working hard* and *working smart*. Working smart requires you to learn from the best, but mentoring takes that idea a step further. Instead of learning from people who are a bit more knowledgeable than you or may be on the same path, mentoring offers you an opportunity to learn from someone who has successfully achieved what you want to achieve and has the experience and wisdom to offer sound, valid, and possibly life-changing guidance and opportunities. An experienced mentor can take your pie-in-the-sky vision and, through experience and personal example, lead you to the point where you can see yourself making it happen. Effective mentorships are hard to create because they occur between two people who have invested time in coming to know, respect, and care about each other. Prime candidates for mentors are current or former bosses, teachers, or family friends. Identifying this type of mentor will help you more than any other action I can recommend. **SSE**

Mark Hopkins is founder of Peak Industries and author of *Shortcut to Prosperity: 10 Entrepreneurial Habits and a Roadmap for an Exceptional Career*. Visit www.ShortcutToProsperity.com.

ACTION: Create a competitive advantage.

Constructive Conflict

Lead the good fight at work.



by Stephen Parker

MANY POPULAR TV SITCOMS revolve around the tensions and dilemmas at work. In these shows, we see our work experiences reflected in comical character conflicts. However, in the real world, conflict seems less funny. Unspoken conflict, passive aggression, hurt feelings, misunderstandings, resentment, jealousy, mistrust, edginess, and angst add to the daily burden.

Common sources of conflict include: pressure to meet deadlines and goals, inequities of roles and resources, balance between revenue and corporate culture, unresolved personality clashes, and rivalries for promotion. Some managers and leaders then internalize these conflicts. Hence, *many are considered by their employees to do a poor job of managing conflicts*. Common failings include: ignoring inappropriate behavior and sub-par performance; allowing anger to poison team chemistry; and failing to recognize and resolve unspoken but corrosive interpersonal conflicts. Failure to handle conflicts typically breeds more conflict.

Constructive Conflicts

Not all conflicts are negative. In fact, conflict can stimulate and re-energize people. So rather than quickly dampening conflicts or swooping in to impose your solutions, look to *leverage disagreements* to examine all sides of an issue, and thus gain fresh perspectives. Seek to channel the emotional charge conflict creates into *productive* pursuits.

Effective *conflict management* starts with not becoming so emotionally invested in a particular outcome, so you can concentrate on helping people focus on business, not personalities.

When conflicts arise, *practice these three behaviors*:

1. View conflict from all perspectives. What are the root causes? Do others interpret the conflict as you do? What might you learn from interpretations?

2. Define what's at stake. Is this conflict about what's best for the business or a difference in *individual styles*? Has anyone committed a serious breach of ethics or failed to do their job? If so, why? *How might you help them do better?*

3. Use "I" vs. "you" when commu-

nicating. Are the parties in conflict taking responsibility for their thoughts and feelings? Are they *personalizing* the conflict by saying "You are . . ." and "You always . . ." making people angry and defensive? Or, do they say "I feel . . ." to open the way to agreement?

Show the Way

Amid conflict, practice *active listening*:

1. Focus on the person. Ensure that your posture shows your complete attention and that your expression and demeanor are open, sincere, and friendly. *Listening is about the speaker.*

2. Listen to what the person is saying. Avoid trying to figure the person out. Listen to discover his or her motivation. While the other person is talking, avoid thinking about what you'll

say. *Your only objective is to understand.*

3. Tell the person what you've heard, in your own words. By paraphrasing what's said, you focus on the person's thoughts and show that you've heard him or her. *Listen for feelings and attitudes.*

4. Ask questions to clarify understanding. Avoid comments that indicate judgment and questions that simply make a point or introduce another topic. *Help people to say what they mean.*

By modeling these behaviors, you transform conflict from a *negative experience* into a *positive force* for better performance—and engaging in *constructive conflict* is *fighting the good fight*. SSE

Stephen Parker is a leadership consultant. Visit sdp31@icloud.com.

ACTION: Engage in constructive conflict.

MANAGEMENT/HIRING

Hire for Attitude

It still determines altitude.



by Richard Secord

AS A SEASONED SALES CONSULTANT and trainer in the hospitality industry, I can assure you: *your attitude will dramatically impact your attitude in sales or service career.* We've heard it all before that *a positive attitude will enhance your achievement and favorably affect your personal life and health.* Of course, this mindset is not easily achievable for many people. Those who start and end each day with a positive outlook are sometimes questioned by associates who find this difficult to achieve or believe.

Nature or Nurture?

Is *positive attitude* a genetic behavioral pattern that we inherit, or is this state of mind achievable by daily reinforcement? Tori DeAngelis writes: "Psychologists who study attitudes agree that *environmental factors*—in particular, the *nonshared environment*, or a person's individual experiences outside the family—are stronger in predicting attitudes than genetic ones."

A positive attitude leads to a healthier lifestyle and a longer life. In 2012 Dr. Gary Small, director of the UCLA Center on Aging, said, "There's an interaction between personality and physiology. Being more positive causes less stress and seems to get people on the right track to live better."

Since your attitude is a result of



your upbringing, your environment and how you personally reinforce this personally trait, it is up to you to *choose an attitude* that will enhance your chances of gaining career altitude.

Also, surround yourself with positive thinkers. This creates the environment that you will succeed and surpass your personal and professional goals. When you are developing a team of associates, one negative thinker with a strong personality can undermine the team and try to sway his negative perception to one or more associates to influence their projected outcome.

If you are a sales or service manager, I recommend that you hire for skills,

experience and attitude. Often, attitude is deemed as *not so important* or believed to be easily augmented once the associate is hired. My experience suggests that an individual's positive attitude starts developing early in their life and continues during their

lifetime—if they reinforce this personality trait. However, dramatic experiences will test the ability to retain a positive outlook and avoid depression.

Depression is attributed to illness. To enhance the recovery of people who suffer from depression, *surround them with positive-minded associates in a positive culture.* I encourage you to *cultivate a positive attitude* and to *hire for attitude.* If you cultivate a positive attitude, hire associates with a positive attitude, and manage with positivity, your attitude will elevate your career altitude. SSE

Richard Secord is a sales consultant and trainer in the hospitality industry. Call 561-951-0722 or email liveforsuccess@aol.com.

ACTION: Hire for attitude in sales and service.

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